Letter no. 23.

13th March.
Thursday.

Capt. J. H. Massey.
6th Palestinian Company,
The Bulls. M.E.F.

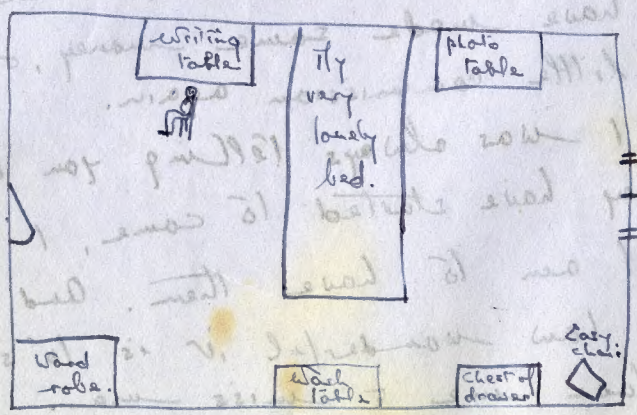
My sweet darling - I have not had a letter from you for a week, & feel almost upset about it. Having had two during the previous week, I was really beginning to feel that this would now become normal. I expect I shall have another one any day now. I had another letter from my mother the other day - it was a very pleasant letter & very affectionate. Patricia seems to have really got down to earth at last - with 8 goats, a young married couple, & some girls who are keen on farming. How very respectable. I hope it will work out all right for her.

I wrote my ma last week, or the week before, & also sent her a short cable two days ago. I must write her again in a week or so's time, & not leave it so long again. I'm afraid I have been very bad about writing to everybody, except to you. But it is annoying to have to sit down & waste time by writing to other people. So I hope you have been keeping my end up to some extent for me - & perhaps written to Tiny & Rescie & let the Association know how & where I am - & you too. I have written to Peter & Tiny once each - from the boat - & I sent Tiny a cable this week, sending regards to the Chairman & all. It would be most unfortunate if, just as my army pay went up, my civil pay went down. The year ends on March 31st - I hope Norths have made some money, & that they decide to pay me a little commission again.

Darling, before your letters came I was always telling you how much I wanted them - & now they have started to come, I have told you how thrilled & happy I am to have them. And I told you at least something of how wonderful it is to see in black & white that you love me & miss me.

But I have not told you how much I enjoy & appreciate your letters. They are lovely, my darling - so interesting & amusing & sympathetic - & it is wonderful the way you tell me all the things I want to hear about, & seem to feel & understand all the things which I worry about & which occupy my mind so much. And you are very wise - & appreciative of my letters. Of course darling, it is worth while - any mortal thing is worth while when it makes you happy & gives you pleasure - & I will write as much as I possibly can. I do wish I had more time to write now, & also that I was seeing more interesting things to write about; as I was on the boat & in Egypt. But I always, even without seeing new things, find it simple to write to you, & can just sit down here, & go on writing for as long as there is time. But you know how slowly I write - I think I am becoming quicker - & the very fact that I am writing to you is always making me stop & think about you.

I write in my bedroom in these barracks. It is just a room in a barrack hut, 18 ft x 12 ft (I have just this minute paced it) - & it has an iron bed & mattress, 2 tables, 2 chairs, a leather easy chair, a wardrobe cupboard, a chest of drawers, & a washhand stand etc, including a jerry, which I do not use.



And of course, I have to stop writing quite often, & look at your photographs - that sends me off into day dreams again. I have just the other day [illegible] two more snaps

of Lisa on the side where your new photograph is. The one of her running across the road, & the one of her spinning round on her toes as Elinor ran past – they are both so pretty. I have now put all the snaps onto a sheet of paper & pasted them down, & they no longer slip about & get under your photo.

The Company Sergeant Major came in for a drink the other night, & was most impressed with your picture & said you looked like a film star. Ben-Azi's wife was here last Sunday, & was terribly anxious to see them too – & she made the same remark. So now you know. For my part, my darling, you are the loveliest, most beautiful, prettiest, & sweetest girl in the whole world, whether you look like a film star or not, & no matter what the C.S.M. & Mrs Ben-Azi think. But still – it is quite nice to have people admire your picture – if only they could know you.

Your last letter but one told me you were going to Ascot; your last letter was not numbered, & told me very little about it. So I suppose the one in between has not arrived yet. I do want to hear all about it, & what sort of a place & house it is, & what your rooms are like.

And you say you are a bit lonely, & like a piece of wood. It is a damn shame, darling – I do so wish with all my heart that I could be with you, for your sake alone.

Madge & Eileen are such an odd couple of girls, & I must think there always seems to be one thing wrong somehow – at Elinor's there was Elinor – & at Joan's there was Roger by day & Bill by night. It does seem awful that

Roger should have become such a loathsome child. And that Bill should become more & more of a pharisee, smug, ordinary little Scotsman. Joan deserves so much better - even though she does talk such a hell of a lot from time to time.
The absolute ideal arrangement would be if you & the baby, & Peggy & her baby, & your mother, could all be together, in some really suitable house in some pretty, pleasant, & safe place. I do hope that this can be arranged. But be sure & make it a safe place - & try very hard, my sweet, to remember to cable me your new address as soon as you know it. E.F.M. is the only way to cable. As you have found out, those C.S.N. things are no earthly use, & I have not received one of them yet, I don't think. And they made such a blasted fuss about them over here, & the same at home I expect. Why can they not see that all this yap, & no results, makes people more browned off than if they had never spoken at all. When the baby comes, will you have one sent by each way, darling. In such a case, perhaps C.S.N. may work alright.
If you are going to have the baby a month early - it will be just about 6 weeks from now. Perhaps when this letter arrives, you will have the baby in your arms. I hope & pray too, darling, as much as you do, that it will be a girl. A boy will be lovely too, but a girl will be lovelier. I shall wait so anxiously, when the time comes, to hear from you. It is fine that you are

going to Hughes, that he is looking after you so well, & taking so much trouble, that you like him. I feel confident that, this time, things will be quite different, that you need not be at all afraid. If ever any body in this world, deserved an easy time, it is you, my sweet, brave sweetheart.

Please think of me as much & as often as you can, my dearest Barbara - know that I shall be thinking of you & wishing for you - longing to be with you.

I will finish this & send it off tomorrow. Goodnight, my lovely sweet. I shall kiss you & think of you when I am in bed. I always do. XXX.

Friday - 14th March. This evening I have been to see "Evelyn Prentice" - Myrna Loy & Wm. Powell. It was v. bad & a waste of time. I was sure that it was a film you had seen - & that Evelyn Prentice was a famous American actress, & you had been very shocked at the time that I had never heard of her before. I wonder who & what film I am mixing it up with.

On Tuesday I went to dinner at the Navy Lieutenant - & his wife - & found it was a cocktail party. There was nobody very amusing or interesting there - so I had 3 gins & trenches, & then went off to see the film "Parlor Hall." The acting was quite adequate, & the story & dialogue and mostly what one has gathered from the press for the last few years. But people here seem to think it is a wonderful film.

And now I must tell you about some of the new chaps in my company; I think you will be interested, & it will give you more of an idea as to what kind of people I

work with & am amongst. Their names, of course, are devastatingly difficult to remember, & in some cases almost impossible to pronounce. I have a good deal less trouble than most, owing to my time in Germany - but the C.S.M. & colour sergeant are too funny for words. I have decided, in most cases quite differently from each other, how the men's names should sound & where the accent should come, & nothing that anybody can say will make them change. The men have now become resigned in many cases, & even pronounce their own names quite wrongly. This also leads to a number of inconveniences, annoyances, & comedies. One afternoon recently, I wanted to see a man called Weiss. The correct pronunciation is Vysse. After about two hours of hustle & bustle & me losing my temper completely, the Sergeant Major's face suddenly lit up in an ecstasy of understanding & revealment & he said, "Oh you mean Weess", laid hands on the man in about 1 minute.

Now, in the office, I am very lucky indeed, have a marvellous staff. First & foremost, there is Corporal Kahitsch, who is the Orderly Room Corporal, or chief clerk. He is a Russian, about 27, & good looking in a rather aesthetic kind of way, has a (what I should call) Ronald Colman moustache. He is extremely intelligent & efficient, & we understand each other very well. He is profoundly interested in the Company, & wants not hear for a moment from any body that we are not the best of the Palestinian Coys. He is very interested in the theatre & music & reads a great deal - & we have long chats at most peculiar times. He is also absolutely trustworthy & unimpeachable, & types himself my confidential letters & reports. I put in a long

report the other day on our training period in camp (more self advertisement), & saying to make sure of this promotion to major) - & he came to me afterwards & said he had enjoyed typing it, & it was really very well written! which I accepted as a compliment from him. He has one piece of bad luck - his family is still in Russia, & he cannot write to them: censorship regulations require the army address on the letter - & it seems his family would be in trouble if the Ogpu, or whatever it is, knew they had a son in this army.

The next one is Lance Corporal Spilz. He is 21, a Czecho-Slovakian, the typist & general hum-drum, & a perfect scream, but fully good at his work. He has fair hair, blue eyes, & a round cherubic face & figure. He is very stiff & correct, & says Yes, sir, & No, sir, to practically everything in a very guttural voice. He was wildly anxious to get his stripe, & knew that he was entitled to it on the establishment of the Coy. But I would not give it to him for some time, because he always had a dirty neck, & needed a hair cut, & showed his pants below his shorts, & managed to get his hands so filthy - & he bit his nails. One by one, his faults were eradicated, the stripe being always dangled before his eyes, & eventually the stripe was bestowed, & he was able to do what he was longing to do - rush home to his mother & show it to her. The Colour Sergeant went home for tea with him one day, & tells me Spilz is the absolute apple of his mother's eye. When they arrived there, the dumpy little Mrs Spilz was all ready for them, with a terrific spread of home made cakes, which the big lance corporal home from the war, proceeded to sit down to &

steadily work his way through, while his mother flapped adoringly around.

Next, I have Corporal Nedvitkoff, who is 30, a Pole. He is the Colour sergeant's general help & right hand man on stores & pay & so on. He is a diminutive little man & looks like an attenuated cross between Conrad Veidt & Vic Oliver. He is a good little man & also very attached & faithful. His wife lives in this place, lucky man — he brought me a couple of weighty marble things the other morning — one a blotter, the other a thing for keeping writing paper.

Then we have the storeman: Private Wachtell (Wagtail, quite unintentionally, to the C.S.M. etc). He is 45, was a lieutenant in the Austrian Army in the last war. But he does his work with great zest & efficiency, & leaps to attention whenever he sees me, & is always rushing to light my cigarettes for me. He's a good chap.

And finally, about the office, there is the Orderly, or general log & message boy, Private Persak. God knows where he comes from, I must ask him. He has discovered that somebody smokes my cigarettes for me, & he now hides them when I am out: so successfully that I think I shall have to allow the thief to carry on.

I hope all this is interesting, darling? I will tell you more from time to time. It is now 12-30 am. & I must to bed.

Goodnight again - dearest darling. I'm always thinking of you & the baby. If you are in the nursing home when this arrives, the baby is here, give it some kisses from me, & tell it how I am longing to see you both. Oh I do love you, my darling - & pine to be with you. You are wonderful & lovely, my sweetheart - All my love - kisses always. Harry.

Mrs. H. Massey.
40. Mrs. Nash.
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By
Air Mail.

Office staff description